

Report of Industrial Relations Dept.
May 1946

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

1. Industrialists' Conference The New Jersey Urban League has accomplished what to our knowledge has not occurred before in the history of New Jersey; nor,

possibly, in the history of any other state. During the month of May two meetings were held by the heads of the largest and most important industries in the state, with twelve and nine top-executives of those industries attending the first and second meetings respectively, and with the purpose and topic of each meeting being the intergration of Negroes into industry and their employment in jobs not before open to Negroes. The twelve companies represented in these meetings have a total capitalization of approximately million dollars - perhaps 1/10(?) the total industrial capitalization of the state, and perhaps a larger capitalization than of at least several large states in the United States of America.

Just having two meetings of such persons on such a question was only the beginning of our objectives and further progress has definitely taken place. Two of the twelve executives have separately invited another group of executives to meet in similar fashion on the same question - integration of and opening industrial employment doors for Negroes. Unofficially it may be reported that one of the companies represented ~~the~~ group by its President ~~and~~ a company which is the largest of its kind in the state) has decided - following the stimulation from the first meeting - to open to Negroes the most controversial employment opportunity for Negroes in its job-list. Five Negroes will be upgraded from other jobs within the company to five of these positions. Careful selection will be followed and the President of this company promises further to insure the success of the move, by acquainting lesser executives with the sincerity and definiteness of the upgradings.

The role played by your Industrial Relations Secretary in these developments is difficult to describe. He is purposefully keeping physically removed from the actual meetings until such a time arrives

that free, uninhibited and frank discussion by the executives makes each of them emotionally as well as intellectually ready to work with him directly. On the other hand, from the initial interesting of Mr. Jones in the project by your Secretary, well-timed interviews and telephone conversations with Mr. Jones have given us great satisfaction in the exploratory way in which Mr. Jones has assembled an important group of industrialists, conducted two meetings - inspiring real progress of the group -, and has helped some of the originally involved executives to interest separately two other groups of executives. Your Secretary has been called on several times for general or specific information about the real objectives of this project, for data concerning Negroes in northern New Jersey, and for interpretation of different points of view. It appears that in the monthly report for June we shall be able to report officially, though confidentially, some important and revolutionary progress.

2. Employment Problems At last the problems of organization and Committee dissention (from one person) concerning the permanent committee on employment problems have clarified themselves. In the first official full meeting of the Committee some revealing facts were seen. Mr. Samuel Flowerman, Executive Secretary of the Jewish Community Relations Committee, sought from the start to continue the pressure he has been exerting to cause this Committee to disband, and to involve the Inter-Group Action Committee in the work; the Employment Problems Committee was authorized to undertake. Your Secretary, as chairman of the Employment Problems Committee, gave his position and the need for the permanent committee and stated for the record that the N. J. Urban League considers the Employment Problems Committee as the proper group to do the work as planned. Mr. Flowerman was allowed to give lengthy argument as to the reasons the Inter-Group Action Committee should do the job, "for all minority groups, with the support of the entire community."

Rev. Melville Wright concurred with Mr. Flowerman and stated that "key people" (such as Mr. Spencer Miller, Jr.) should be relied on for exerting "influence" toward the objectives of the Committee and that with such people not being on the Committee the I.G.A.R. should be asked to do the job since the I.G.A.R. represents such a large part of the community.

The other members present voted to request the I.G.A.R. to undertake the work of the Committee and that if accepted, the Committee should disband.

The other members present were Mr. Joseph Kelly, W.M.C.; Misses Ethel Williams and Elisabeth Spear, Y.W.C.A.; Mr. Gruner, Jewish Vocational Service; Mr. James Marshall, Building Service Employees' Union; and your Secretary. *Miss Katherine Hoffman, C.T. & leader of the opposition to Mr. Flowerman, was ill and could not attend.*
Your Secretary intends to keep the contacts he has made through this Committee with the Chamber of Commerce, the Committee on Economic Development, and the New Jersey Rehabilitation Commission.

Other Community Work One meeting each of the Program Committees and of the Sub-Committee on Social Tensions of the New Jersey Welfare Council were attended in May. Contacts were continued with the W.M.C., U.S.E.S., Community Vocational Service, both Y.W.C.A. (Industrial Departments) branches, the Chamber of Commerce, and the New Jersey Rehabilitation Commission.

EMPLOYER CONTACTS Routine contacts continued with about thirty different employers, involving discussions of need for workers, plans for dismissal of Negro workers as cut-backs demand, plans for management-union cooperation on question of Negro lay-offs, interpretation of good racial relations policies, setting job rates, and special recruiting of Negro workers for a comparatively new factory.

A request for an appointment was finally received from the Industrial Relations manager of Public Service Coordinated Transport. This was in response to a carefully worked letter to him from your Secretary, which was designed to form a basis of bringing to the attention of the public the discriminatory policies of the company if the letter were not answered nor an appointment promised. Next month's report should show some results of our coping with the delaying tactics of the company. A letter was received (at our stimulation) from the union at P.S.C.T., stating that it does not discriminate.

Continued work with J.E. Mergott Company is placing your Secretary in the position of Industrial Relations Consultant to the company. So far our allowing so much of our time to be so used has been because the plant is in a predominantly Negro neighborhood, has (since the war) about 385 employers of which about 100 are Negroes, wants a better record from all its workers on absenteeism, etc.; but has no Negro in a lead, supervisory or office job. It provides a good example of how a small plant, with workers living quite nearby, may integrate those workers throughout the plant on the bases of merit. *He helped to*

Follow-up on the case of four Negro girls being discharged from Federal Telephone & Radio Corporation because of bad feeling between them and one white girl (resulting in name-calling, slaps, a court case and reprimand to all girls from the Judge), showed that our original work resulted in the rehiring of only one of the four Negro girls and the continued retention of the equally guilty white girl. Renewed discussions about this with the Business Agency of the United Electrical and Radio Machine Workers Union, Local 447, and with the the Industrial Relations manager of the plant started activity again that by the end of May had netted nothing but additional "checking up." *begun to* The company was placed in position of having to explain itself, and *it has* ~~had to~~ *had to* concede to other suggestions ~~by the management~~, from your Secretary. These suggestions have been outstanding for several months but no action had been taken until now. Now management is "going to" deploy the high concentration of Negroes in the Thomas Street plant, to other plants. That is, the Negro workers will be sent to various plants as need for their skill and need for changed procedure take place in all the plants of the company. We shall have to keep close check on this, however, since the company has had back-log cut-backs already and might attempt to eliminate some Negroes in the reshuffle.

COUNSELLING The total number of persons counselled dropped in May because of the illness of your Secretary. Three persons requiring special counselling were seen. One was seen twice and required relief from emotional stress that exhibited itself in vicarious confusion. This 43 year old man had resigned his job as mail handler after 17 years in the Post Office. He was burdened with the knowledge that he would have been eligible for pension had he remained another eight years. As he came to us he could not find a job that would leave him any sense of "status" commensurate with his past evaluation of himself, or his aspirations. At one time he had taught school in the South - with four years of high school training. He was beginning to make a martyr of himself by applying for jobs he felt he could not get ~~them~~, in order to develop cases of discrimination around himself. This would place the responsibility for his seeming failure at 43, not on himself but on discrimination. We helped him feel his own intrinsic worth as an intelligent man, decreased his anxiety about "doing Personnel work" in some plant, and tried to help him continue his life - not "start all over again" - as a worker in a machine shop where his steady work might help him find a place as a much depended-on worker.

One male and three female factory placements were made.